

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001456

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT PASS USAID (CHRISTINE WEGMAN)
EAP/PD FOR ANNE SESHADRI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAM FOR RISING ETHNIC PARTY
LEADERS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy Rangoon's Public Affairs Section (PAS) recently initiated a leadership capacity building program (called the "Global English" Program) for 23 representatives from nine ethnic democratic political parties. The program's nine-month curriculum, targeted at rising or current party leaders and modeled on the NLD-oriented Professional Development Program (PDP), includes the study of democracy and human rights, economic development and globalization, social indicators, gender, environment, and the role of international organizations. The "Global English" Program is funded through an ESF grant to the instructor of the PDP program. End Summary.

Ethnic PDP?

2. (SBU) Recognizing both the success of the PDP program with rising members of the NLD and the lack of similar training opportunities for ethnic democratic political parties, Embassy Rangoon in the summer of 2004 began to explore the possibility of offering a PDP-style program to ethnic political parties extant during the 1990 elections and still currently dedicated to non-violent democratic change in Burma. Given the USG's support for democratic reform in Burma, this program would necessarily exclude participation from ethnic minority-based armed opposition groups, whether on cease-fire or not, and those political parties aligned with the SPDC.

3. (SBU) Dubbed the "Global English" Program (to enable the participants to blend in with the American Center's hundreds of regular English students), this initiative targets rising or current ethnic party leaders and will cover democracy and human rights, economic development and globalization, social indicators, gender, environment, and the role of international organizations, among other subjects. In collaboration with PAS Rangoon, the program coordinator will also recruit relevant foreign experts to lecture to program participants. Similar to the PDP program, the objective of the "Global English" Program is to provide rising ethnic leaders with the knowledge and skills to better advance their democratic goals in both local and international contexts. The program will be funded by an ESF grant awarded directly to the instructor of the PDP course.

Ethnic groups enthusiastic to learn

4. (SBU) In early September, Embassy officers briefed leaders of 15 ethnic democratic political parties about the program. Notably, only two of the 15 parties attending the briefing (the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy and Shan State Kokang Democratic Party) have legal standing with the Burmese government. The others have been deregistered by the military regime. As a result, some of the ethnic parties have only minimally functioning party structures.

5. (SBU) The ethnic party response to Embassy solicitation to participate in the program was overwhelming; post interviewed 50 candidates from 11 ethnic democratic parties during late September and early October. PAS Rangoon screened candidates for their potential or current leadership roles in their respective parties and their English-speaking ability. To the extent possible given the sometimes minimal qualifications of individual candidates, we tried to ensure that each ethnic group (if not each ethnic political party) was represented in the program. In fact, because of the strong interest in the program, PAS Rangoon organized two sections, dividing chosen participants into senior leadership and junior party member groups.

6. (SBU) A total of 23 candidates from the following nine ethnic political parties (number of individual party participants in parenthesis) are currently participating in the "Global English" Program: Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (2); Arakan League for Democracy (4); Kachin State National Congress for Democracy (1); Chin National League for Democracy (3); Kayin (Karen) National Congress for Democracy (2); Mon National Democratic Front (3); National Democratic Party for Human Rights (Rohingya) (4); United

Nationalities League for Democracy (mixed ethnic) (2); and Zomi (Chin) National Congress (2).

17. (SBU) Program participants range in rank from chairman and general secretary to youth wing leader to general member. Though PAS Rangoon actively encouraged ethnic parties to nominate women for the program, only three women, one a Muslim, are currently participating.

18. (SBU) Attendees have participated enthusiastically in initial class sessions, which began in mid-October, and in fact, post continues to receive additional nominations for the program. We hope that such enthusiasm continues over time, and that the "Global English" Program will avoid many of the participation restraints that affected NLD PDP students. In that context, the October 19 removal of PM Khin Nyunt and the further consolidation of power by Senior General Than Shwe has to date had no effect on participant attendance to the "Global English" course.

19. (U) In parallel with the ongoing coursework, PAS Rangoon plans to obtain Burmese translations of the classroom texts, funding this task through a separate grant mechanism. Such translations would allow for even greater dissemination of the program's substantive content.

MCMULLEN